Dan, I brought this in for your info.
Ken

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Richardson Flat makes EPA list

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A 160-acre site close to Park City has received a place on the National Priority List for Superfund, a toxic waste clean-up act.

The site is known in Park City as Richardson Flat, and is located south of Highway 248 and west of Highway 40, roughly at the junction of those two roads. The flat contains mine tailings released from a floatation mill which was part of the Keetley mine.

That mine, located a few miles south along Highway 40 from the tailings area, is an inactive silver, lead and zinc mine which has not been active since April 1982.

Most of Richardson Flat is covered with a tailings pond now used to settle solids from treated mine wastewater. But, when the mine was active, it received excess tailings as a slurry.

Because tailings often contain high levels of heavy metals dangerous to humans if inhaled or ingested, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) set up air and water monitoring stations at Richardson in 1985 and 1986. Although the time the monitors actually collected data was short, it was long enough for the federal agency to propose Richardson Flat be on the national priority list for more study and clean up if warranted.

The week-long air monitoring found "releases" of four problem metals— arsenic, cadmium, lead and zinc. Surface water sampling of Silver Creek, which runs through the flat, found the same for all but zinc.

To determine whether a hazardous chemical has been released, EPA samples what it calls "upgradient" in both air and water. In other words, upstream from the tailings area, and in a spot upwind from for air testing. If there is substantially more of a hazardous material downstream or downwind, it is considered a release and scores highly in a ranking system used to place areas on the national priority list for Superfund.

The data collected and averaged by EPA crews in 1985 and 1986 are as follows. For air, arsenic was found in concentrations 50 times higher than background, cadmium at 82 times higher, lead at 100 times higher and zinc at 40 times higher. The air was tested for one week, from July 7 to July 14, 1986.

Tailings were also tested and compared to soil samples nearby but not right under Richardson Flat. The results are: arsenic at 10 to 60 times higher than soil, cadmium at two to five times, lead at two to seven times, and zinc at 2.5 to four times more concentrated.

Richardson Flat was one of 229 sites proposed for listing earlier this month. According to David Schaller, chief of Denver regional EPA Superfund site evaluation section, coordinating the work on 229 sites across the nation was a major effort, and that is why two years have passed since the data on Richardson was collected. Schaller noted there are now 1,177 sites on the national list.

The next step, according to Schaller, is to do a remedial investigation where air, water and soil are monitored much more extensively than they have been. The state of Utah is offered first chance to oversee the data collection effort, but has not informed EPA whether it will take the agency up on its offer, said Schaller.

EPA will also try to find responsible parties to pay for the investigation and any clean-up. Schaller said if no responsible parties come forward or agree to EPA's conditions, the agency will fund the work and seek cost recovery in court later.